



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
**SB 428 An Act Protecting Interns from Workplace
Harassment and Discrimination**
Labor and Public Employees Committee, February 17, 2015

Senator Winfield, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS) supports raised bill SB 428, An Act Protecting Interns from Workplace Harassment and Discrimination. CONNSACS is the state's leading voice to end sexual violence and the coalition of our state's nine community-based sexual assault crisis services programs, which provide free and confidential sexual assault crisis counseling and victim advocacy to thousands of women, men and children, of all ages, each year.

Certified sexual assault victim advocates provided hospital, police and court accompaniment, support groups, individual counseling, 24/7 hotline support, information and referrals to victims and survivors of sexual violence throughout the state, and community education and professional training presentations. CONNSACS also employs specialized post-conviction victim advocates who represent victims and their interests throughout the state as part of the Office of Adult Probation Sex Offender Supervision Units and Parole Special Management Units.

Unpaid interns work in organizations to better their careers and gain real-world experience. Many interns are college students and participate in unpaid internships for college credit. Employers also benefit from unpaid interns as a cost savings measure to the company and by developing potential future employees.

In addition to the lack of compensation, unpaid interns also face a lack of workplace protections compared to paid employees. If an unpaid intern experiences harassment and discrimination, they do not have the grounds to file a civil complaint. While criminal proceeding may be an option, this does not protect interns from being fired for rejecting advances from an employee or filing a complaint with human resources.

Since 2013, Oregon, Illinois, California, and New York have all passed legislation to give harassment and discrimination protections to unpaid interns¹.

CONNSACS does a great deal of community awareness to address sexual harassment and prevent sexual violence, including Connecticut's first statewide prevention campaign, *Where Do You Stand? CT*. CONNSACS recommends that any legislation passed also require interns to

¹ Taube, A. (2014, Oct 6). Some States Are Finally Making It Illegal To Sexually Harass Unpaid Interns. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/states-banning-sexual-harassment-of-unpaid-interns-2014-10>

receive sexual harassment training because all employees, paid and unpaid, should know their rights and to be able to identify harassment and discrimination².

Thank you.

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² Where Do You Stand? Retrieved from <http://www.connnsacs.org/wheredoyoustandct.htm>